

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 02939 101344Z

53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01

MC-01 EB-07 COME-00 AID-05 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 INR-05

NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-02 SAM-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /076 W

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R 101311Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2152

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2939

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LY

SUBJ: SYRIA - LIBYAN RELATIONS

REF: TRIPOLI 1305

1. SUMMARY: TWO LIBYAN DELEGATIONS HAVE VISITED DAMASCUS
IN PAST WEEK IN ATTEMPTS TO REJUVENATE CONFEDERATION OF
ARAB REPUBLICS (CAR). FIRST DELEGATION WHICH WAS FROM LIBYAN ASU
PAVED WAY FOR VISIT OF BASHIR AL-RABITI, PRESIDENT OF THE
FEDERAL COUNCIL OF STATE OF CAR. TALKS
REPORTEDLY CENTERED ON WAYS TO STRENGTHEN CONFEDERATION.
SARG HAS NOT IN PAST SHOWN MORE THAN PASSING INTERES IN
STRENGTHENING CONFEDERATION. END SUMMARY

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PAGE 02 DAMASC 02939 101344Z

2. LARG, HAS TAKEN INITIATIVE DURING PAST WEEK TO BROADEN CONTACTS WITH SARG TO STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATION OF CONFEDERATION OF ARAB STATES. FOUR-MAN DELEGATION FROM LIBYAN ASU HEADED BY FARAJ ALI BALHA VISITED SYRIA FROM DECEMBER 1-5. BALHA DELIVERED LETTER TO PRESIDENT ASAD FROM PRESIDENT OF LIBYAN ASU CONGRESS EXPRESSING NEED FOR RENEWED EFFORTS TO "CONSOLIDATE" CONFEDERATION OF ARAB REPUBLICS, "COMPLETE" ITS CONSTITUTIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND "STABILIZE AND INCREASE" EFFECTIVENESS OF CAR'S EXISTING INSTITUTIONS. PRESS REPORTS THAT ASAD INDICATED SYRIA WOULD "MAKE EVERY EFFORT" TO STRENGTHEN CONFEDERATION.

3. SECOND DELEGATION WAS HEADED BY BASHIR AL-RABITI, PRESIDENT OF FEDERAL COUNCIL OF STATE. RABITI AND TWO SECRETARIES OF COUNCIL ARRIVED FROM CAIRO ON DECEMBER 6, TO DISCUSS WITH ASAD, AS MEMBER OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL OF CAR, RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY FEDERAL COUNCIL. AMONG THESE ARE: TO OBTAIN INCREASED SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS, TO GRANT INSTITUTIONS CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS, AND TO HOLD MEETING OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL. RABITI SAW ASAD ON DECEMBER 8 AND LEFT FOLLOWING DAY FOR BEIRUT. NEITHER RABITI NOR SARG MADE ANY SUBSTANTIVE REMARKS AFTER VISIT THOUGH RABITI WAS FULL OF PRAISE FOR ASAD'S "PATIENCE, FORSIGHTEDNESS, AND PROFOUND AND CONSCIOUS UNDERSTANDING OF EVENTS IN ARAB WORLD."

4. LIBYAN AMBASSADOR BEN KHAYAL CONFIRMED TO ME THAT VISITS ILLUSTRATE QADHAFI'S DETERMINATION TO REINVIGORATE CAR. BEN KHAYAL SAID THAT EVEN BEFORE OCTOBER WAR, THERE HAD BEEN LITTLE EFFECTIVE COORDINATION OF MEMBER STATES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ONE OF CAR'S PRIME PURPOSES. SINCE OCTOBER WAR CAR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN AT STANDSTILL. AS EXAMPLE OF DIFFICULTIES ENHERENT IN CARRYING OUT CAR CHARTER, KHAYAL NOTED THAT TRIPOLI WAS STILL UNABLE CONVINCE EITHER EGYPT OR SYRIA THAT PETROCHEMICALS WAS OBVIOUS AREA FOR LIBYAN ACTIVITY AND, CONVERSELY, IT WAS UNECONOMICAL FOR OTHER TWO TO ESTABLISH PETROCHEMICAL

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 02939 101344Z

INDUSTRIES. ONLY STUDIES IN HAND PROMISING EARLY ACTION WERE THOSE RELATING TO UNIFICATION OF EGYPTIAN, SYRIAN, AND LIBYAN SEA AND AIR TRANSPORT ORGANIZATIONS. KHAYAL, WHO PARTICIPATED IN MEETINGS WITH ASAD, ADDED THAT SYRIAN PRESIDENT STRESSED HIS SERIOUS INTEREST IN DEVELOPING CAR AS EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION FOR COORDINATING OVERALL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POLICIES OF MEMBER STATES.

5. COMMENT: ASAD'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS CAR FULLY CONSISTENT WITH HIS ANNOUNCED POLICY OF SUPPORT FOR ANY AND ALL MOVES TOWARDS ARAB UNITY. LACK OF ANY EVIDENCE OF SERIOUS PAST STEPS BY SYRIA IN SUPPORT OF CAR, HOWEVER, LEAVES US DOUBTFUL THAT ASAD LIKELY PUT THIS PARTICULAR VEHICLE TO EXTENSIVE USE. IN BILATERAL CONTEXT VISITS ARE SIGNIFICANT. RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND LIBYA COOLED NOTICEABLY AFTER SARG OPTED FOR DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT. THESE VISITS ARE MOST OBVIOUS LIBYAN EFFORT SINCE SPRING (OF WHICH WE AWARE) INDICATING LIBYA WANTS IMPROVED RELATIONS. FACT VISITS GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE BY SARG CONTROLLED MEDIA GIVES US REASON TO BELIEVE SARG SHARES THIS DESIRE.
MURPHY

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